



Bul-5/25/72
Sandy Grady . . . On the Loose

JDL Power Confronts White Power: It Was a Noisy Party in Kensington

That was a noisy party they threw at Charlie Kress' place last night. It could have been downright riotous, but luckily the guest of honor didn't show up.

On one corner of Cumberland and Sepviva sts., about 30 members of the Jewish Defense League were parading and chanting. "Two-four-six-eight, we've had enough of Jewish hate!" Across the street some of the 700 Kensingtonians waved wooden swastikas and yelled: "White power! White power!"

When they were tuned up, the JDL rallyists chanted: "Charlie Kress must go! Charlie Kress must go!"

This was too much for the Kensingtonians. Charlie Kress may be a neo-Nazi, but he's also a neighbor. So ladies in pin curlers and tee-shirted guys, some carrying a beer from Al's Tavern, roared: "We want Charlie! We want Charlie!"

THE BATTLE of Charlie Kress' soul boomed for an hour. Then a big Hertz rental van swooped down to pluck up the Jewish Defense League members. Police were trying to clear the street of Kensingtonians, who were waving American flags and singing.

And here came Charlie Kress, ambling down the sidewalk. He blinked at the crowd. A neighbor said there had been a lot of excitement, Charlie.

"Great!" said Charlie brightly. "Anybody get hurt bad?"

That's Charlie, a laugh-a-minute. But what do you expect from a guy whose heroes are Adolph Hitler and George Lincoln Rockwell? Charlie's a true believer — he wants the Negroes and Jews out of his America. He's been busy recording phone messages ("the blacks are the enemy!") and peddling Socialist White People's Party propaganda at schools. Today Kensington, tomorrow the



Photos by James J. Craig, of The Bulletin
BUSINESSMAN Frank Thomas, 11, at right, took advantage of the crowd and made some money selling water ice.



DEMONSTRATORS of Jewish Defense League fill a street in front of Kensington home of Charlie Kress, whose neo-Nazi beliefs have aroused controversy. Kress was defended by some of his neighbors.

world.

CHARLIE KRESS can't understand why his neo-Nazi bluster has riled people. Last week he lost his job as a lunch truck driver. On Sunday his doorstep was bombed. On

Monday the bartender at Al's Tavern refused him a drink. The last crisis is not covered in Mein Kampf.

so Charlie wasn't at home for the party, a loss which didn't make George Fencel and the Civil Disobedience Squad unhappy. They were busy enough separating the Kensington natives from the JDL marchers, who were roaring over their bullhorn, "Up against the wall, Nazis!"

There was one quick fist fight, and some screeching insults that would make Archie Bunker wince. Explained Joe Stinger, the Democratic committeeman in the crowd: "We

don't like anything Charlie Kress stands for, but we don't want these outsiders raising hell in our neighborhood. We're ready for 'em."

It was a raucous, ethnic rhubarb. Picture it this way: the Jewish militants were blasting the Nazis, the Kensington crowd was yelling "Irish power!", and the 12-year-old entrepreneurs were busy selling Italian ice. All in the Family.

Then at 9 P.M., when the JDL protesters had sped away and Kensingtonians were singing patriotic hymns in front of Al's Tavern, Charlie Kress sauntered onto the scene. He invited this reporter and two of Fencel's plainclothesmen into his apartment, and slammed the steel-sheathed door against the crowd.

Kress slumped into a chair and sighed, "Pressure, pressure. They won't leave me alone. The Jews are trying to get me for my political beliefs."

LIKE MANY FANATICS, Kress is mild, level-voiced, cheerful. At 36, he's an ex-guitar player (he quit because of black influence on music), an eighth-grade dropout, product of a broken Kensington home, himself now divorced with two daughters in California. There was a smell of loneliness in the shabby apartment — with portraits of Hitler on every wall, even a sign on the white water boiler: "Hitler Was Right!"

"I'm going to have to play it cool," said Charlie Kress.

"No more phone messages, no more papers for a while. But you'll see — there'll be an all-white America yet."

Benny Powell is a young black cop on the CDS unit. He sat 10 feet away from Kress and smiled at him.

"You know what I mean," Kress said plaintively to Benny. "Blacks and whites and Jews can't live together. I mean, I don't like dictatorships, but Hitler had the right racial ideas."

Benny Powell's smile would have sliced through steel.

Then Charlie Kress dug into his desk. He proudly showed a letter from his 11-year-old daughter. The notebook paper was covered with swastikas. "You're right, daddy, white power will go on forever," said the childish scrawl.

"She's got guts," said Charlie Kress. "The white males in this country are becoming peace creeps and fairies and liberals. The Communists want to mix the races — but if there were 10, even five more men like me. . ."

Even Benny Powell had enough of Charlie's harangue. The cop did a sensible thing — he tuned in the Phillies game on Charlie's 30-year-old radio.

Outside, Cumberland st. was quiet except for the whoops of the beer drinkers in Al's Tavern. Driving away, the jeers and the mob noise seemed unreal, like carnival echoes.

But I kept seeing that letter from Charlie Kress's 11-year-old kid. That was real. Too real.